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ABSTRACT

An analysis of educational professionalism is presented within the framework of sociology and class stratification. If a profession is defined as any area of human activity which requires some level of advanced skills or education to perform, there should be certain prerequisite conditions, such as the acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills, and certain conditions relative to professional performance, such as resolving problems for the client, advancing knowledge, etc. The following set of requisite conditions regarding the "professional pedagogical act" are set forth: (1) It (the act of teaching) should enhance the professional pedagogue and client so that they emerge from the relationship as subjects, not objects; (2) It should enable the professional pedagogue to participate fully in curriculum and policy decisions; (3) It should assist the professional pedagogue and client to acquire personal meaning of life; (4) It should engender in the professional pedagogue and client a sense of autonomy; (5) It should enhance the professional pedagogue's ability to care for others; and (6) It should enable the professional pedagogue to share with others. (JD)

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EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALISM: SOME NEW CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN OLD THEME

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Each human society orchestrates the allocation of its resources, privileges, etc., by utilizing some social interaction structure. Sociologists who have penetrated these social interaction patterns have brought some conceptual meaning to these human phenomena by providing labels and categories for these phenomena.

In some societies (western), the allocation of resources, privileges, etc., has been conceptually labeled by sociologists as stratification. The conceptual notion of stratification has thus facilitated a contextual mapping of variations on the theme of stratification, i.e., class systems, caste systems, estate systems.

It is within this sociological dimension of class that I would like to frame my analysis of educational professionalism, and offer some new considerations for judging educational professionalism.

Gehrad Fahy, an Irish educator, on an exchange visit to the University of West Florida, provides some definitional clarity to the term profession by pointing out that " the term profession is not a precise descriptive concept but more of an evaluative one .... " [1] In other words, Professor Fahy contends, " the term is a symbol for a desired conception of one's work and therefore of one's self. "

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Another way of seeing this point is that " profession " is a desired state on the societal hierarchical ladder of stratification, i.e., class system.

What follows, if there is any credence to the foregoing way of viewing the term profession, is that the more prestige accorded a certain class or social strata, the more one might find the work and self of individuals in that strata being accorded professional status.

Fahy also lends credence to my contention when he asserts: " Since the prestige occupations are termed professions the term is symbolic of the status to which less prestigeful occupations aspire. "

Fahy also provides further explanatory power vis-a-vis the term profession within the stratification framework by pointing out: " The standing of a profession is in some degree affected by the social class of its recruits. The higher the social strata of the recruits, the higher the status of the profession. Additionally, the higher the status of the profession the more it attracts recruits from the higher social strata. "

Educators and others have for some time been engaged in something similar to the " shoe box anology " described by Michael Katz in his book, Class, Bureaucracy and Schools. That is, they would, within the stratification framework, describe characteristics essential to a profession, i.e., a prestige occupation. They would then analyze the extent to which teaching could be classified as a profession. Some of the criteria used to judge educational professionalism include:

1. It performs an essential social service
2. It is founded upon a systematic body of knowledge.
3. It requires a lengthy period of academic and practical training.

4. It has a high degree of autonomy. Autonomy to make decisions; Autonomy of the profession to make decisions about its modus operandi.
5. It has a Code of Ethics.
6. It generates in-service growth.
7. It applies research and theory to practices in resolving human problems.
8. It has control over licensing standards and/or entry requirements.
9. It accepts responsibility for judgements made and acts performed related to services rendered.
10. Its professional associations and/or elite groups provide recognition for individual achievements.

The literature re educational professionalism is carved into three major foci: 1. There are those who focus on the characteristics themselves. This effort is represented by the work of : Lieberman, 1965; Corwin, 1965; Krause, 1971. 2. There are those who use a set of given criteria to judge whether teaching is or is not a profession. This effort is represented by the work of : Ornstein, 1976; Swanson, 1982; Bulger, 1972; Farquhar 1978; Birch & Reynolds, 1982. 3. There are those who focus on one given criterion or two given criteria to test hypotheses, pinpoint weaknesses or construct training paradigms. This work is represented by: Weller 1981; Ward, 1978; Fritts, 1979; Leigh 1979.

I believe Robert Howsam, et al., get our focus away from the stratification trap. Writing in the 1976 AACTE Report entitled, Educating a Profession, they point out: " In many ways, the question of status within the hierarchy of professions is false or a nonissue. Status is a consequence of important conditions rather than an important condition in its own right. What the teaching profession needs is a set of conditions which are favorable to the delivery of professional-level educational service to the society and its communities. If these conditions cannot be achieved, then neither can quality educational service. In that case it is society which becomes the loser. "

Another way of looking at this point is through the eyes of a high school principal in Pensacola, Florida, who asked rather poignantly re high school athletics, " what does it pay to have a winner on Friday nights, and a loser in life? "

I believe another question may be posed this way re educational professionalism: " What does it pay to have a profession which meets stratified criteria, but not a professional? " Could it or would it be more advantageous to zero in on the professional act, i.e., the pedagogical act.

Someone once said that " the difference between an educated person and a professional teacher is pedagogy. " The pedagogical act " occurs whenever one individual contrives an experience for another in the hope that a desired learning will take place. " (Howsam, et al., 1976).

Suppose we assume that a profession means any area of human activity which requires some level of advanced skills or education to perform. Then there should be (a) certain prerequisite conditions, i.e., the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc., and (b) certain con-

ditions relative to professional performance, i.e., resolving problems for the client, advancing knowledge, etc.

I believe Howsam, and others, call our attention to the conditional aspect of the pedagogical act when they asserted: " What the teaching profession needs is a set of conditions which are favorable to the delivery of professional-level educational service to the society .... "

I would like to offer a set of requisite conditions re the professional pedagogical act:

1. The professional pedagogical act should enhance the professional pedagogue and client being subjects rather than objects.

The professional pedagogue must be what Maxine Greene calls the authentic teacher. Since the pedagogical act is a human act then Martin Buber's I - Thou relationship should exist. That is, both pedagogue and client must emerge from the relationship as subjects. Factors that delimit subject - subject interaction (mistrust, role-playing, labelling, categorization) must be non-existent.

2. The professional pedagogical act should enable the professional pedagogue to participate fully in decisions that affect his/her life.

To just follow orders or just choose from what is given is antithetical to the pedagogical act. The professional pedagogue must be able to shape and make what should be; whether it be curriculum, policy, etc.. Making choices from one's actions should be a prerequisite for the professional pedagogue. Responsibility which is the major ingredient in participating fully in de-

cisions that affect one's life, is for the professional pedagogue the ability to provide justifications for his/her own acts.

3. The professional pedagogical act should assist the professional pedagogue and client to acquire personal meaning of life.

The mark of the professional pedagogue should not be the ability to answer questions but the ability to raise proper questions. The professional pedagogue should not engage the client in seeking the answer, but in exploration through divergent thinking of all answers. The professional pedagogue cultivates in him/herself and client intelligence which is the capacity to think freely, without fear, without a formula, so that one begins to discover for one's self what is real, what is true. Being motivated extrinsically only, living through imitation, or being guided only by cognitive results do not enhance a mind that is clear, and hence intelligent.

4. The professional pedagogical act should engender the professional pedagogue and client being what they want to be.

The professional pedagogue engenders in him/herself and client a sense of autonomy. The professional pedagogue is not easily swayed by the whims of others. He/she is free from role definitions, and shuns blind conformity. Following personal wishes/interests/satisfactions is valued over activities that only produce a result. The professional pedagogical act should provide a sense of inner peace about self for both pedagogue and client.

5. The professional pedagogical act should enhance the professional pedagogue caring for others.

The professional pedagogical act should increase one's sense of community; one's sense of connection; rather than facilitating one's feeling of being an indistinguishable part of the whole. Shared respect is a vital component here, with the requisite of power running up and down. The professional pedagogue must have a place to be heard, wanted, and recognized; also a place or way of life that reflects the values and aspirations of its members.

6. The professional pedagogical act should enable the professional pedagogue to share with others.

The professional pedagogue recognizes the strengths and contributions of other people, and contributes to the further development of others. He/she builds relationships based on mutuality rather than just looking out for self, and trying to outdo the other guy or gal. He/she is not obsessed with winning, and does not have to always compare in order to determine his/her worth.

I contend that the foregoing conditions are vital ingredients for the enhancement of educational professionalism and the pedagogical act, and is a more fruitful pursuit than one in which stratified criteria are pursued in order to achieve a consequence of important conditions (status). The conditions I have outlined are important conditions in their own right.

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